

Amendments to the Claims

With this Amendment, claims 1, 2, 4, 6-8, 11-19, 21-25, 27-30 and 32-34 have been amended and claims 20, 26 and 31 have been cancelled. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for the sterile packaging of a prosthetic implant made of polyethylene, ~~including the steps of~~ comprising:

successively placing the implant in a flexible, gas-impermeable sachet having an opening adapted to be sealed, creating a vacuum in the sachet and then sealing its opening[[,]];

placing the sachet containing the implant in a gas-impermeable envelope including an opening adapted to be sealed[[,]];

establishing an inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope by injecting an inert gas inside the envelope until the pressure inside the envelope reaches a predetermined pressure less than atmospheric pressure;[[,]] ~~and thereafter~~

closing the envelope hermetically by sealing its opening[[,]]; ~~and thereafter,~~
sterilizing the implant within the sachet and the envelope by irradiation, wherein a pressure of the inert gas in the envelope is greater than or equal to a pressure in the sachet.

2. (Currently Amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein sealing the opening of the sachet and sealing the opening of the envelope comprise ~~the closure of the sachet and of the envelope is effected by~~ heat-sealing their respective openings.

3. (Original) The process of Claim 1, wherein the inert gaseous atmosphere formed in the envelope is constituted by argon, nitrogen or a mixture of these gaseous elements.

4. (Currently Amended)The process of Claim 1, wherein the sachet includes a layer of ~~aluminium~~ aluminum.

5. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the envelope includes a layer of a polyamide and a layer of a polyethylene.

6. (Currently Amended)The process of Claim 1, wherein ~~the step of~~ establishing the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope comprises ~~includes~~:

creating a vacuum around and inside the envelope~~[[,]]~~; and

~~injecting an inert gas inside the envelope until the pressure inside the envelope reaches a predetermined value less than atmospheric pressure,~~
and,

~~after having hermetically closed the envelope, the envelope is subjected~~

subjecting the envelope to atmospheric pressure after hermetically closing the envelope so that the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope has a pressure greater ~~which is not less~~ than the pressure in the sachet.

7. (Currently Amended)The process of Claim ~~[[6]]~~ 1, wherein the inert gas is injected into the envelope until ~~[[the]]~~ a pressure of the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope reaches a predetermined value between about 0.3 and about 0.7 bar.

8. (Currently Amended)The process of Claim 1, wherein, before or after irradiation of the implant, an assembly formed by the implant, the sachet and the envelope is placed in a rigid packing whose internal volume is substantially equal to ~~[[the]]~~ a volume occupied by the assembly.

9. (Original) The process of Claim 8, wherein, before placing the assembly formed by the implant, the sachet and the envelope in the rigid packing, the envelope is folded on itself.

10. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 8, wherein the rigid packing and the envelope cooperate by being of complementary shapes in order to immobilize the sachet containing the implant.

11. (Currently Amended) A process for the sterile packaging of a prosthetic implant that includes polyethylene, the process comprising ~~the steps of:~~

sealing the prosthetic implant in a flexible, gas-impermeable sachet at a first pressure;

locating the sachet containing the prosthetic implant in a gas-impermeable envelope, the envelope including an opening adapted to be sealed;

establishing an inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope;

hermetically sealing the opening so that the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope ~~comprise~~ comprises a second pressure less than atmosphere pressure and greater than or equal to the first pressure in the sachet; and

sterilizing the implant within the sachet and the envelope by irradiation.

12. (Currently Amended) The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, ~~comprising selecting a wherein the~~ sachet ~~[[that]]~~ includes a layer of ~~aluminium~~ aluminum.

13. (Currently Amended) The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, ~~comprising selecting a wherein the~~ sachet ~~[[that]]~~ is opaque to visible light.

14. (Currently Amended) The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, wherein ~~the step of~~ sealing the implant in the sachet comprises ~~the steps of:~~

reducing a pressure in and around the sachet containing the prosthetic implant to about the first pressure; and

sealing the sachet.

15. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, wherein ~~the step of~~ sealing the implant in the sachet comprises ~~the steps of~~:

evacuating the envelope containing the sachet and the prosthetic implant;
introducing an inert gas into the envelope at about the second pressure; and
sealing the envelope.

16. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, wherein the inert gaseous atmosphere comprises argon, nitrogen, or a mixture thereof.

17. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, wherein the envelope comprises a layer of a polyamide and a layer of a polyethylene.

18. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, wherein the envelope comprises a rigid or semi-rigid material.

19. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, wherein ~~the step of~~ establishing the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope comprises injecting an inert gas inside the envelope until ~~[[the]]~~ a pressure inside the envelope reaches about the second pressure.

20. Cancelled

21. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, wherein the second pressure comprises a pressure of about 0.3 to about 0.7 bar.

22. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, and further comprising ~~the step of~~ locating an assembly comprising the envelope containing the sachet and the prosthetic implant in a rigid container comprising an internal volume substantially equal to a volume occupied by the assembly.

23. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 11~~ Claim 11, and further comprising ~~the step of~~ locating an assembly comprising the envelope containing the sachet and the prosthetic implant in a rigid container comprising an internal shape complementary to a shape of the assembly.

24. (Currently Amended)A process for the sterile packaging of a prosthetic implant that includes polyethylene, the process comprising ~~the steps of~~:

locating the prosthetic implant in a flexible, gas-impermeable sachet;

locating the sachet containing the prosthetic implant in a gas-impermeable envelope;

reducing a pressure in and around the sachet containing the prosthetic implant to about ~~[[the]]~~ a first pressure;

sealing the sachet;

evacuating the envelope containing the sachet and the prosthetic implant;

introducing an inert gas into the envelope;

sealing the envelope so that the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope comprises a second pressure less than atmospheric pressure and greater than or equal to the first pressure in the sachet; and

sterilizing the envelope containing the implant within the sachet by irradiation.

25. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 24~~ Claim 24, wherein the envelope comprises a rigid or semi-rigid material.

26. Cancelled

27. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 24~~ Claim 24, wherein the second pressure comprises about 0.3 and about 0.7 bar.

28. (Currently Amended)A process for the sterile packaging of a prosthetic implant that includes polyethylene, wherein the prosthetic implant is sealed at a first pressure in a flexible, gas-impermeable sachet, the process comprising ~~the steps of~~:

locating the sachet containing the prosthetic implant in a gas-impermeable envelope, the envelope including an opening adapted to be sealed;

establishing an inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope;

hermetically sealing the opening so that the inert gaseous atmosphere in the ~~envelopes comprise~~ envelope comprises a second pressure less than atmospheric pressure and greater than or equal to the first pressure in the sachet; and

sterilizing the implant within the sachet and the envelope by irradiation.

29. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 28~~ Claim 28, wherein the envelope comprises a rigid or semi-rigid material.

30. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 28~~ Claim 28, wherein ~~the step of~~ establishing the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope comprises injecting an inert gas inside the envelope until ~~[[the]]~~ a pressure inside the envelope reaches about the second pressure.

31. Cancelled

32. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 28~~ Claim 28, wherein the second pressure comprises a pressure of about 0.3 to about 0.7 bar.

33. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 28~~ Claim 28, and further comprising ~~the step of~~ locating an assembly comprising the envelope containing the sachet and the prosthetic implant in a rigid container comprising an internal volume substantially equal to a volume occupied by the assembly.

34. (Currently Amended)The process of ~~claim 28~~ Claim 28, and further comprising ~~the step of~~ locating an assembly comprising the envelope containing the sachet and the prosthetic implant in a rigid container comprising an internal shape complementary to a shape of the assembly.